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TOM FORD PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARTIN SCHOELLER  
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## Ever So Cool Kuhl-Linscomb

What began in 1994 as one booth in an antique co-op featuring one-of-a-kind finds has evolved into the design and lifestyle store Kuhl-Linscomb. Endearing owners Pam and Dan Linscomb deliver charm as well as an eclectic assortment of upscale products in a boutique-style setting.



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John A. Daugherty, Jr., Chairman and CEO of John Daugherty, Realtors, recently sat down with Pam and Dan to talk about [Houston's most unique shopping destination](#). The reason for their success quickly became apparent to Daugherty: The Linscombs are truly passionate about their business. Every item in the store is displayed in a manner that allows the customer to have an experience, to touch and feel. And, everything — absolutely everything — is hand-selected and displayed with painstaking attention. Upper Kirby residents consider Dan and Pam not just the owners of Kuhl-Linscomb but terrific neighbors, too. Pam's incredible eye for the unique, combined with Dan's business sense as founder of Linscomb & Williams, has allowed the duo to grow Kuhl-Linscomb from a single store to what *The Telegraph* (London) refers to as the "visionary megaplex of home-furnishing stores." Kuhl-Linscomb, the jewel of Upper Kirby, proudly embraces the quirky and chic.

**Q.** John A. Daugherty, Jr., Chairman and CEO, John Daugherty, Realtors **A.** Pam Kuhl-Linscomb and Dan Linscomb, Owners

**JD: How did you meet?**

**PKL:** Dan and I met at a gas station when I first moved to Houston. I had a new car with a mystery gas cap and was having no luck getting assistance from the worker at the self-service station. Observing it all in a cool manner, Dan offered to help me — his damsel in distress. After finding the mystery cap hidden behind the license plate and filling the tank, Dan gave me his business card (always the marketer). I thanked him and drove off, not knowing that destiny would bring us together time and time again — in cafes, grocery stores, you name it. Eventually, a chance meeting while jogging sealed the deal. The rest is history.

**JD: You carry unique items that often cannot be found again. What special finds have been the most difficult to let go?**

**PKL:** Our found objects help us to tell stories with new merchandise. A vintage papier-mâché dog fills in to wear our latest collars, old and sun-bleached "No Hunting" signs serve as backdrops for our waxed canvas rifle and shell cases, hunting and fishing pocket guides, and collection of camo-printed gadgets. Vintage roadside "Eat" signs act as way-finding devices, beckoning shoppers to the housewares department to stock up on kitchen gadgets, gourmet food, and the latest cookbooks

from celebrated chefs around the world. When our special finds find a perfect home in a display, it's hard to let go, and just because life is complicated, it's always that very moment that a client asks for the price. "Not for sale!" (A status that often changes the next day!)

**JD: This business — or, better put, passion — has led you to travel the world in search of treasures and new ideas. What is the most interesting object you have brought back to the store?**

**PKL:** If you visit the store and walk through the campus showrooms, viewing the many objects, you may have the same problem we have — Which one is the most interesting?

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It's hard to name a superlative, but we would like to note a few creative wares that come to mind:

We have continued to grow our business with vintage furniture. Whether it be a mid-century modern leather sofa or furniture made from the industrial artifacts of America's bygone manufacturing era — zinc-top tables with muscular crank bases, factory carts and lighting made of hand-blown glass or metal grating — our clients come to find unique furniture for their home. They want a well-designed, lived-in, heritage look.

Another KL favorite is our collection of candlesticks from salvaged material — such as old tin toys, antique doll parts, and colorful metal fragments. While these statuesque candlesticks are functional oddities, they are more art object than anything else.

Finding something original in jewelry is difficult — It's all about nuance in design. It's always a good moment when you stumble upon a new line with its own voice. We are always on the hunt for the most unique artisan jewelry, and we work closely with jewelry makers to create combinations all our own.

**JD: Kuhl-Linscomb has become a destination for many Houstonians and tourists. You often have celebrities or famous designers come in. Can you tell us of any interesting experiences with the famous?**

**PKL:** I must say, Dan lacks a little in current pop culture, so when a famous native Houstonian came to shop the store with her family (other famous people), Dan had no idea he had randomly offered his signature tour of the KL campus to one of the most followed and celebrated singer/dancer/entertainers ever. His excuse for not recognizing the world famous celebrity? "Street clothes, no make-up."

**JD: What are your favorite items in the store right now?**

**PKL:** That changes almost daily. Every time I focus on a department, I am reminded of how many finds we have made.

Anything with a face! We are animal lovers, so there's always an attachment to our concrete lawn ornaments — majestic life-sized deer, a whole army of garden gnomes, a Galapagos tortoise. We have a giant Texas horned lizard that lives amongst two large concrete cacti, leather goods and fringed moccasins in our women's fashion department. We have dogs, flamingos, rabbits, wild cats and a Texas armadillo, all roaming our travel, pet, stationery, floral, and gift departments. We're basically recreating Noah's Ark in concrete.

Dan's favorite has always been a collection of vintage 1940s/1950s metal bellhops and cowboys, who greet customers at the front door with their waving mechanical arms and larger-than-life size, like Big Tex at the Texas State Fair. Dan is also known for his love of signs: arrows, letters, and vintage neon signs from America's road-tripping days.

**JD: You've recently purchased Arthur Moss' Penguin Arms building. Did you have a connection (emotional or otherwise) to this building prior to incorporating it into the campus?**

**PKL:** As you may know, the Penguin Arms has been written about many times over the years. We are two of many who love the building.

**JD: Does Kuhl-Linscomb have a mascot?**

**PKL:** Bandit, the resident cat. Customers make pilgrimages to bedding to find the famous black-and-white cat slumbering on beds between feasts. He is an eternal teenager who roamed the block of houses before we repurposed them. Before he was royalty, he would burglarize the pet doors of the homes on Steel St. like Goldilocks, eating other pets' food and sleeping in their beds.

**JD: What is the most extreme place you have traveled to in order to purchase new items for the store?**

**PKL:** I would say being tangled in the jungles of Northern Thailand, hiking from home to home, and village to village, to bring back incredible finds was a little extreme. The best part of sourcing this way is a story comes with every piece. We source products worldwide — from Europe to Asia — to create a wide assortment in many categories. Offering products in a range of styles, eras, and price points enables our customers to create a distinct home environment with that certain collectedness and

personality not easily achieved by ordering from a catalog or single store. We work hard, so customers don't have to!

**JD: What is your favorite section of the store and why?**

**PKL:** The store is a perpetual work in progress. More than anything, I enjoy styling, re-fixturing, and mixing things up around the store. Each day's project brings me to a different corner of the campus, and it's fun to jump from section to section to style vignettes, work with my associates, and keep an ear on what Houston wants.

**JD: What does the inside of your own home look like? What is your favorite object in it?**

**PKL:** A high-end storage unit. We are rarely at home but do enjoy the comfort and luxury of our Hästens mattress when we bunk each night. Home is for sleeping and storage of KL finds.

**JD: What are your roles in relationship to the store, and how do they differ between the two of you?**

**DL:** You may have noticed how many questions I have answered. Pam is the *queen*. I am the drudge!

**PKL:** (laughing) Yeah, right!

**JD: What do you do with your free time (however limited it may be) when you are not in the store or involved in doing something for the store?**

**PKL:** Free... what?

A free day is less important when you love what you do, so it's God's blessing that Houston has embraced the store and our efforts to bring them the best.

**JD: How do you treat your customers differently than most stores? You seem very concerned that your customers have a special experience each and every time they enter your store. Unlike many stores, you make sure your customers can touch and feel.**

**PKL:** In an age where most shops are downsizing and spreading their goods online, we are the crazy people doing the opposite. We are constantly expanding our campus of repurposed mid-century buildings to accommodate new finds for our customers. The intimate spaces create a kind of secret neighborhood haven and a comfortable atmosphere where customers can discover a wide range of handpicked items that have been carefully curated. The presentation is sophisticated but low-key. The homelike setting, paired with friendly service, goes a long way in making luxury goods approachable and accessible, so that we're really just another neighbor. We want to bring high design to the public without being that store full of guarded merchandise and that feeling that grandmother's over your shoulder telling you "don't touch."

**JD: How do you interface with your neighbors?**

**PKL:** We have wonderful neighbors who stop in regularly to borrow much more than sugar. A pet-friendly store, we're often a destination on afternoon walks — a water fill-up station for Upper Kirby canines. Our porches are filled with chairs for neighbors, who often stop in just to sit.

Whether or not we are their walkable one-stop shop, neighbors have embraced us as fellow advocates for preserving and improving this great community. Owning property here, we have a very strong interest in making this the best possible neighborhood. There's no other place we'd rather be.

*Featured Treasures:*

1. Tom Dixon, *Bash Vessel, Small and Large*
2. Antler Chandelier
3. Burstenhaus Redecker, *Hedgehog Table Brush*
4. *Pheromone* by Christopher Marley, *Real Insect Framed Wall Art*
5. Carl Hansen & Søn, *CH24 Walnut Wishbone Chair*



5.

